

BOLSA CHICA WETLANDS STEERING COMMITTEE



California State Lands Commission ➤ United States Environmental Protection Agency ➤ California Department of Fish & Game ➤ United States Fish and Wildlife Service
California Coastal Conservancy ➤ National Marine Fisheries Service ➤ California Resources Agency ➤ United States Army Corps of Engineers

OIL WELL REMOVAL BEGINS

Prior to starting the tidal basin restoration at Bolsa Chica, some 57 oil wells must be abandoned and removed. The Steering Committee has reached agreement with Aera Energy on the value of the production resources that will be foregone by the abandonment. Aera will be reimbursed for 15/19ths of its actual costs of abandonment based on terms of the 1997 Agreement. Well abandonment began on September 24, 2003. There are several phases to abandoning and removing oil wells, which are being carried out by Aera and their contractors under the eyes of the State Division of Oil and Gas and the State Lands Commission. First, the well must be capped well below the ground surface, usually with a massive concrete plug. Second,



the well cellar, pipes, pumps, and structures at and above the ground surface must be dismantled and removed. Next, the connecting pipelines and conduit



Oil Well capping and removal in progress.

and other related structures will be removed from the site. It will take about a year to fully abandon all the wells and remove the supporting infrastructure.

The removal wells constitute only small portion of current oil production from the area. Most of the oil wells in the southeast quadrant of the lowland and next to Pacific Coast Highway will continue to function for another 25 years.

STEERING COMMITTEE PARTICIPATES IN HUNTINGTON BEACH EARTH DAY EVENT

April 26, 2003, Earth Day activities at the Huntington Beach Pier were an opportunity for the Steering Committee to meet with the public and provide information about the Lowlands Restoration Project. Members of the Committee answered questions and handed out information about the restoration effort. Estimates



suggest that some 2000 people attended the all day event. With the Amigos de Bolsa Chica and other supporters, the Steering Committee participated in a public information townhall meeting in June 2003. Another townhall meeting is contemplated for early May, 2004.



Outreach at Huntington Beach Earth Day.

Left. A few short months after this Huntington Beach Earth Day photo, Paul Rose, the Corps of Engineers Steering Committee representative, pictured second from left, passed away suddenly.

FISH AND WILDLIFE SERVICE SELECTS FINAL DESIGN CONTRACTOR

Moffatt & Nichol Engineers of Long Beach was selected to undertake final design plans and specifications for the Bolsa Chica Lowlands Restoration Project. The firm has considerable experience with design of coastal wetland engineering features. Under their direction, much additional topography, survey, and soils testing has been completed. During "value engineering" at the 35% milestone a team of outside experts reviewed the plans and offered suggestions for cost and construction method improvement for consideration in preparing the final design. The 65% design milestone was completed in December 2003. Design work and final plans and specifications should be completed by June 2004. Actual construction work on the ground is slated to start in October 2004. A public groundbreaking event is planned for the beginning of construction.



Soil Borings along New Levee Alignment.

The Fish & Wildlife Service believes this to be one of the largest restoration projects ever by the agency. Subcontractors GeoPentech, GeoSyntech Consultants, Merkel & Associates and The Culver Group will assist Moffatt & Nichol. Included in the work is an ocean inlet and jetties, a new bridge over the inlet for Pacific Coast Highway, a new bridge for oil field access, a 367 acre full tidal area with berms for a 9-foot tidal range, new nesting areas, 180 acres of muted tidal influence, and a groundwater barrier. With the core group of Moffatt and Nichol engineers and Steering Committee participants, we are completing the detailed work of translating the design concept into an actual construction plans and specifications. We also regularly interact with Caltrans, State Parks, and Aera, in particular. Despite the opportunity to cost-share, Orange County has

declined to participate in improvements to the downstream end of the East Garden Grove-Wintersburg Flood Control Channel.

To prepare ourselves and potential contractors for the bid solicitation in June, the Fish and Wildlife Service is going to conduct a "pre-bid" conference in February 5, 2004. This conference is expected to be attended by company representatives that may be interested in bidding on construction contracts this summer. The Fish and Wildlife Service expects to solicit construction bids this summer using the Federal online advertising mechanism at FedBizOpps.gov and make a selection by September.

When we actually begin construction in October 2004 we will first need to secure



Final Design Group and Aera.

our construction area. This means we will curtail public access in a few areas that are not currently restricted. The Fish and Game Ecological Reserve loop trail will be closed from the east end of the boardwalk to the flood channel flapgates to allow construction of the levee along this section. We intend to close the south levee of the flood channel from the Fieldstone property to the flood channel flapgates. Once the levee construction is completed, the loop trail will be reopened. (However, independent of the restoration project, Fish and Game intends to repair the parking lot and boardwalk which will require temporary closure and the timing is uncertain.) The security fence around the oil field and restricted public access in those areas is expected to continue as long as operating oil wells remain. The restored area just south of the south levee has suffered from trespass which has severely damaged some of the wetland habitats there. Once the restoration is

completed, reopening of public access along the south levee may be considered, provided a way can be found to protect the restored habitat and maintain oil field security. A public access plan is expected to be prepared for the restored area, once the restoration construction is completed and the long-term land manager is identified.

We also will construct a groundwater barrier to prevent tidal seawater from our restoration area from aggravating the existing shallow groundwater problem east of the Bolsa Chica lowland beneath the houses. The construction of this barrier will require the operation of construction equipment along some parts of the eastern property line (roughly from Alfann Circle to Whitford Lane) for a few days. This project feature is literally just over the back fence of some of the residences that back up onto the State property. Once we have the details, we intend to inform these homeowners of just what to expect and when the groundwater barrier construction would be done.

WILDLIFE CONSERVATION BOARD ALLOCATES \$10 MILLION TO BOLSA RESTORATION

On November 18, 2003, the Wildlife Conservation Board allocated \$10 million in Proposition 50 bond funds for the Bolsa Chica Lowlands Restoration Project. These funds will be added to those provided by the Port of Long Beach and Port of Los Angeles in mitigation of harbor development projects. Another \$10 million grant request has been submitted to the California Coastal Conservancy. Consideration of this request may occur in the Spring.

BOLSA SUPPORTERS DETTLOFF AND MORRISON RECOGNIZED

The Bolsa Chica Wetlands Steering Committee has recognized two long-time supporters of Bolsa Chica restoration.

Former Huntington Beach council member and mayor Shirley Dettloff was given a Certificate of Appreciation during April 26, 2003, Earth Day activities at the Huntington Beach Pier. Shirley was honored for her stint as a representative to the Coastal Commission and years of activism in the restoration effort. She was part of the founding group for the Amigos de Bolsa Chica and dedicated to the Bolsa's preservation and restoration in both her private and public capacities. Representatives of the Steering Committee that had known and worked with her for many years presented Shirley with her Certificate.



Earth Day Presentation to Shirley Dettloff.

Adrienne Morrison also was commended on the occasion of her retirement as Executive Director of the Bolsa Chica Conservancy. The Steering Committee took note of her vision and passion for preserving and restoring Bolsa Chica. She was involved in frequent meetings with government officials and the many planning efforts that ultimately resulted in the adopted Restoration Project. Adrienne received her Commendation following a dinner in her honor on July 30, 2003, in Huntington Beach.



FIELDSTONE ACQUISITION AND RESTORATION

The Steering Committee is waiting for the resolution of the PCB contamination on the former Fieldstone property before moving to acquire the property and completely include it in our restoration plans. Additional sampling has been conducted but the results and final report have not yet been provided. While the Department of Toxic Substances Control has begun PCB cleanup around the houses, the cleanup plan for the Fieldstone property has not yet been established.

COASTAL WOOLLYHEADS REVIVAL WORK



Coastal Woollyheads.

With funding support from the Fish and Wildlife Service Coastal Program, the Bolsa Chica Conservancy began the removal of iceplant from Rabbit Island in an effort to allow a rare dune plant, coastal woollyheads, to grow there again. The glacial mass of iceplant had nearly completely overgrown Rabbit Island preventing woollyheads from growing. This work must be completed before the construction closure in October 2004. Those of you who want to volunteer, come out and help the Conservancy carry tons of iceplant away.



Workers removing iceplant at Rabbit Island.

GAS TRANSMISSION LINE TO BE RELOCATED



Gas line section to be removed.

A portion of an existing natural gas distribution pipeline will have to be relocated to clear the tidal basin construction area for the Restoration Project. The 14" line, owned by the City of Long Beach and operated by Southern California Gas Company, will be relocated within the site. It is used to convey gas to power plants in Huntington Beach and Los Alamitos and distribute gas from the Aera oil field. Environmental review of the new work is underway. The State Lands Commission is the lead agency for the work

under CEQA. Removal of the old line was addressed in the Restoration Project EIR/EIS. The design and location of the relocated pipeline was not known at that time. The north and south ends of the existing gas line, where it crosses the Bolsa Chica boundaries, will remain in place. The middle section, which must be moved out of our tidal basin before October 2004, will be reconstructed along an existing oil pipeline corridor and road which skirts the boundary of the tidal basin. With this alignment, a portion of the gas line will probably need to be modified in 25 years, after the oil field plays out and the restoration of the future full tidal area can be initiated. Impacts upon wetlands, habitats, or Aera's oil operation are expected to be minimal.

CLEAN UP AGREEMENTS NEAR

After completion of an Environmental Risk Assessment, the Steering Committee has worked to reach agreement on clean up and removal of contaminants found to occur in the Restoration area. Responsible parties Aera Energy LLC and Hearthside Homes have tentatively agreed to clean up objectives proposed by the Steering Committee. Final agreements to implement the clean up are being prepared and should be complete by the first of March. While no truly harmful contaminants were discovered the site will be cleaned to levels appropriate for the use as a wetland. Delineation and verification sampling will proceed as the clean up activities progress. Those wishing to review the Ecological Risk Assessment can find the Executive Summary at the following websites: www.slc.ca.gov or www.swr.ucsd.edu/hcd/bolsa. Copies in CD format can be obtained from Jack Fancher (see members list on the page 6).



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